WE CLAIM:

1. A method for forming an integrated circuit structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a substrate having a semiconductor surface;

forming an oxygen-containing layer on said semiconductor surface; **then subsequently**

forming a uniform nitrogen distribution throughout said oxygen-containing layer; and **subsequently**

re-oxidizing said layer by a rapid anneal step in an oxidizer and hydrogen mixture of N2O and H2 for stabilizing the nitrogen distribution **[at minimum oxidation rate]**, healing plasma-induced damage, and reducing interfacial defect density.

2. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxygen-containing layer is an ultra-thin silicon dioxide layer in the thickness range from 0.6 to 2.0 nm.

3. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxygen-containing layer is an oxynitride layer.

4. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said step of forming an oxide is a rapid thermal oxidation.

5. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said anneal steps comprise 5 to 60 s at 800 to 1050 °C in N2O/H2, flowing at 1 to 20 standard liters/min at 2 to 50 Torr.

6. The method according to Claim 5 wherein said N2O/H2 mixture contains 0.5 to 30 % **[(preferred 1 %)]** H2 with the balance N2O.

7. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxidizer and hydrogen mixture comprises NO and H2, or O2 and H2.

8. **(CANCELED)** The method according to Claim 1 wherein said reduced

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forming a uniform nitrogen distribution throughout said oxygen-containing layer; and subsequently

re-oxidizing said layer by a rapid anneal step in an oxidizer and hydrogen mixture of N2O and H2 for stabilizing the nitrogen distribution, healing plasma-induced damage, and reducing interfacial defect density.

2. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxygen-containing layer is an ultra-thin silicon dioxide layer in the thickness range from 0.6 to 2.0 nm.

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6. The method according to Claim 5 wherein said N2O/H2 mixture contains 0.5 to 30 % H2 with the balance N2O.

7. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said oxidizer and hydrogen mixture comprises NO and H2, or O2 and H2.

9. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said integrated

circuit structure includes a transistor having a conductive gate structure disposed on a gate dielectric layer;

wherein said dielectric layer, after annealing and re-oxidizing, forms said gate dielectric layer; and further comprising the step of:

forming said conductive gate structure upon said gate dielectric layer.

10. The method according to Claim 9 wherein said conductive gate is comprised of doped poly-silicon.

11. The method according to Claim 9 wherein said gate dielectric is an ultra-thin silicon dioxide layer.

12. The method according to Claim 9 further comprising the steps of forming source and drain and their respective contact to complete said transistor.

13. The method according to Claim 1 wherein said integrated circuit structure includes a capacitor having a capacitor dielectric; and further comprising the steps of:

forming a first electrode over said substrate, said semiconductor surface present at said first electrode; and

forming a second electrode on said dielectric layer;

wherein said dielectric layer forms said capacitor dielectric.

14. An integrated circuit having a component as produced by the method of Claim 1.

15. The circuit according to Claim 14 wherein said component is a transistor.

16. The circuit according to Claim 14 wherein said component is a capacitor.